

# Public Document Pack

## Witney Town Council

Mrs Sharon Groth FSLCC fCMgr  
Town Clerk

Cllr Joy Aitman  
Mayor of Witney



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16 June 2020

To: Members of the Sport and Play Committee - V Gwatkin, J Aitman, L Ashbourne, T Ashby, D Butterfield, L Duncan, A Prosser and R Smith (and all other Town Councillors for information)

You are hereby summonsed to a Meeting of the **Sport and Play Committee** to be held virtually via Zoom\* on **Monday, 22nd June, 2020 at 6.00 pm** for the transaction of the business stated below.

\*By virtue of The Local Authorities & Police & Crime Panels (Coronavirus)(Flexibility of Local Authority & Police & Crime Panels Meetings)(England & Wales) Regulations 2020.

### MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Members of the public wishing to address the Council on an agenda item below must contact the Town Clerk ([townclerk@witney-tc.gov.uk](mailto:townclerk@witney-tc.gov.uk)) 24 hours before the meeting in order to arrange the necessary access to be able to speak at the meeting due to it being held virtually. A link with details on how to view the meeting will be published on the Town Council's website and Social Media nearer the time.

### RECORDING OF MEETINGS

Under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 the council's public meetings may be recorded, which includes filming, audio-recording as well as photography. As a matter of courtesy, if you intend to record any part of the proceedings please let the Town Clerk or Democratic Services Officer know before the start of the meeting.

### AGENDA

*All Council Meetings are open to the public and press, unless otherwise stated.*

#### 1. Apologies for Absence

To consider apologies and reasons for absence.

Committee Members who are unable to attend the meeting should notify the Democratic Services Officer ([nicky.cayley@witney-tc.gov.uk](mailto:nicky.cayley@witney-tc.gov.uk)) **prior to the meeting**, stating the reason for absence.

**Standing Order 30(a)(v)** permits the appointment of substitute Councillors to a Committee whose role is to replace ordinary Councillors at a meeting of a Committee if ordinary Councillors of the Committee have confirmed to the Proper Officer **before** the meeting that they are unable to attend.

#### 2. Declarations of Interest

Members are reminded to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests in any of the items under consideration at this meeting in accordance with the Town Council's code of conduct.

3. **Election of Vice Chair**

To elect a Vice Chair of the Committee for the municipal year.

4. **Minutes** (Pages 3 - 6)

- a) To adopt and sign as a correct record the minutes of the Halls and Green Spaces Committee held 9 March 2020;
- b) Matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda (Questions on the progress on any item).

5. **Public Participation**

**the meeting will adjourn for this item**

Members of the public may speak for a maximum of **five minutes** each during the period of public participation, in line with Standing Order 42. Matters raised shall relate to the following items on the agenda.

6. **Committee Terms of Reference, Vision and Objectives for the Municipal Year** (Pages 7 - 8)

To consider the revised Terms of Reference for the Committee as attached, and to also consider the Committee's vision and objectives for the remainder of the municipal year, taking into consideration projects already underway, and the day to day management of the Council facilities under its remit – balancing financial and human resources available.

7. **Operational Report - Progress on Improvements and Repairs since the Last Meeting** (Pages 9 - 12)

To receive and consider the report of the Operations and Estates Officer

8. **Request for Hogging Path from Witney parkrun** (Pages 13 - 26)

To receive and consider the report of the Operations & Estates Officer following a request from Witney parkrun to install a hogging path at West Witney.

9. **Witney Sports Facilities - Options Paper** (Pages 27 - 46)

To receive and consider the report of Consult QRD Ltd



Town Clerk

**HALLS & GREEN SPACES COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE  
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

**Held on Monday, 9 March 2020**

**At 6.00 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney**

**Present:**

Councillor V Gwatkin (Chair)

Councillors:	L Duncan	D Enright
	T Ashby	M Jones
	D Butterfield	J King
	O Collins	
Officers:	Nicky Cayley	Democratic Services Officer
	Adam Clapton	Office Manager
	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	John Hickman	Operations & Estates Officer
	Tomas Smith	Venue Manager
Others:	none	

**H77    APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for her absence was received from Cllr Rosa Bolger.

**H78    DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest in matters to be discussed at the meeting.

**H79    PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no members of the public present for this item.

**H80    MINUTES**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the Halls & Green Spaces Committee meeting held 13 January 2020.

**a) RESOLVED:**     that the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2020 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**b) MATTERS ARISING:**

1. The Town Clerk advised that in minute H7 the money to repair St, Mary's pillars would be from reserves, not rolling capital;

2. The Town Clerk advised that in minute H10, the earmarked allotment funding could not be distributed elsewhere.
3. A member asked if the letters regarding river pollution had been written to the County Public Health Department yet. The Office Manager confirmed that this had been done.

H81 **OPERATIONAL REPORT - PROGRESS ON IMPROVEMENTS AND REPAIRS SINCE LAST MEETING**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer, covering halls maintenance, summer sports preparation, play areas, footpath works, the lake and country park, cemeteries and Emma's Dyke.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the report be noted and that the remaining budget of £465 in 206/4042 be rolled over into the 2020/21 budget towards costs for fencing materials regarding Emma's Dyke at the Lake and Country Park.

H82 **PUBLIC HALLS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Venue Manager, which gave an update on both works that had taken place and booking. Hirers were happy with the new charges.

The Venue Manager was now the Designated Premises Supervisor for the Corn Exchange.

**RESOLVED:** that the report be noted.

H83 **CEMETERIES AND CLOSED CHURCHYARDS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer. This updated members on the need to add an additional section (number 3) for family ashes, the wildflower meadow plans for the Windrush Cemetery, and faculty applications for memorial testing. There were ongoing issues with the damaged St. Mary's Church pillars and the archway. The Operations and Estates officer also advised that the bat survey for the Cesar of Lebanon had been commissioned.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the report be noted;
2. that Tower Hill section 3 for family ashes be prepared as detailed in the report;
3. that 1kg of yellow rattle seed be purchased for £180 for the Windrush Cemetery and Earthwatch be asked if they have any wildflower seed they would donate;
4. that Officers seek professional advice on the development of a plan for the future infrastructure and burials within Windrush Cemetery;
5. that provision of £9, 000 from the budget be made in order for the Town Council to carry out the required repairs to St Mary's churchyard pillars/arch and boundary wall from recent vehicular damage.



H84 **ALLOTMENT UPDATE**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer. He advised that he was awaiting retrospective applications for temporary structures such as poly tunnels but was yet to receive any. As the Allotment Association had agreed to look into composting, he had agreed to consider shredding any larger compostable material on site.

The Council was still waiting for soil tests on the new allotments at Windrush Place and could not proceed until it had been analysed to establish its suitability. This was obviously creating a delay in transfer.

**RESOLVED:** that the report be noted and the Operations and Estates Officer be given permission to consider possible assistance with the shredding of larger composting materials at allotment sites – any further requests for assistance would be brought back to Committee.

H85 **SPORTS AND RECREATION GROUNDS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer. Members were updated on cricket and the Spartans playing football at Woodgreen.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the freehold transfer of the land at Woodgreen playing fields be requested;
3. that the additional cost of the current grounds contract for Woodgreen field be taken on at a cost of £1,922.88;
4. that the Town Clerk speaks to Giles Hughes at WODC about the amount that annual maintenance costs for Woodgreen field in order that the Town Council could work out the amount to request for a commuted sum from WODC to take on the field;
5. that the Town Council continues discussions with Woodgreen School regarding access to the changing rooms and who would be responsible for booking changing rooms etc;
6. that it be agreed that the Town Council should seek agreement from WODC to maintain Woodgreen Field area from 1st May 2020 in order to prepare football pitches for 2020/21 season until the area is transferred to the Town Council;
7. that the purchase of 8 x Goal Post sockets at approx. £400 be agreed.

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The meeting closed at: 6.40 pm

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Chair

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## **Draft Terms of Reference for the Sport and Play Committee**

- a) To maintain all Recreation Grounds, Parks (including play equipment) and public open spaces and to initiate and supervise all matters of control properly associated with this recreation function;
- b) To maintain and supervise all sports activities upon any Recreation Ground or other recreational open space and building erected for such purposes thereon;
- c) To develop a sports strategy for all sports across the town;
- d) To deal with the development and investment in the Council owned play areas, ensuring they remain safe and compliant with the Council's statutory health and safety obligations;
- e) The Membership of the Committee shall consist of 6 Members plus the Town Mayor and the Leader of the Council ex officio with voting rights;
- f) The quorum of the Committee shall be 4 Members.

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## SPORT AND PLAY COMMITTEE

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<b>Date:</b>	Monday 22 June 2020
<b>Title:</b>	Progress on improvements and repairs since last meeting & COVID-19 Update
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Operations and Estates Officer - John Hickman

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### Background

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the progress of improvements and repairs since the last meeting of Halls & Green Spaces Committee and the impact of COVID-19 on facilities under the auspices of this Committee.

Members should be mindful of the fact that COVID-19 pandemic has affected the operation of a lot of the Council's facilities and the day to day operation of the Council has been very limited during these extraordinary times.

### Current Situation

**Football:** Unfortunately due to COVID-19 progress on transferring the pitches at Woodgreen from WODC to WTC has halted. WTC has therefore not been able to carry out any works to these pitches in preparation for the 2020/21 season. New goal post sockets have also still to be purchased and installed by WTC and planned end of season pitch and hedge works have not been able to be carried out at this site.

Vikings football youth teams were found to have started training again on the Leys Recreation Ground following F.A. guidance, despite not seeking permission from the Council. Under the Council's terms and conditions of hire clubs have also not provided the necessary documentation of Risk Assessments and Public Liability Insurance for these sessions. It has been discovered that Vikings intend to start training 15 of its teams from 17<sup>th</sup> June with a further 11 teams starting training from the 1<sup>st</sup> July. Training sessions were planned to be held at the Leys, Burwell and King Georges Field. Currently WTC is not allowing any organised activity to take place on its grounds, this is expected to be reviewed again following further Government advice after 4<sup>th</sup> July, although Officers are now working with the Clubs to ensure they can operate safely and consideration of the general public using the site for their recreational purposes is also taken in to account.

All football pitches other than Leys pitch one, two and five at the Leys and the pitch at King Georges Field received end of season pitch renovations including verti draining, top dressing and over seeding during April as the football season had ended early. It would be hoped that the early renovation and reduced use of pitches before and after the end of season will have given the pitches a chance to rejuvenate well before the start of this coming season.

**West Witney Cricket:** Swifts cricket is getting on well with its preparations of the glass house at West Witney, the base for the new cricket score shed has been laid and the shed should be built in the near future.

A total of 5 tables and 20 chairs second hand have been given to Swifts for the glass house at West Witney for their cricket teas. The water tap cover has been lowered slightly next to the square by the works team. The Swifts are intending to cover the water tap cover and winter fence steel sockets with an artificial grass covering.

**Leys Cricket:** Changing rooms and toilets have been fully redecorated and tiling/showers etc. during lock down by the works team. There has been issues with the lack of water pressure at the Cricket table making getting enough water onto the cricket table a real issue for the Grounds Contractors given the current dry weather. This can be an issue when the Splash Park when in operation as the splash pad draws lots of water however it is not usually an issue when the splash pad is not operating as is the current position.

The Operations & Estates Officer is of the opinion that Thames water has cut the water pressure in the main to reduce water consumption in the current dry weather.

The water main to the cricket square is a 22mm supply directly of the main so should really not be an issue as long as there is reasonable pressure in the main. WTC need to consider how to provide increased water supply to the Cricket Square in the future as the lack of water getting to the square is a real issue.

**Bowls:** Both Witney Town Bowls and West Witney Bowls have started to play again in line with current government guidance. Witney mills Bowls has opted not to re-start play at this current time.

There has once again been an issue with West Witney Bowls irrigation system this has now been repaired and watering systems are back to normal at West Witney.

**Play Areas:** All new play area installations by Proludic have now been completed and signed off at the Leys, Burwell, Fieldmere, Moorland and King Georges Field play areas.

All play areas at the time of writing this report remain closed and fenced off due to COVID-19; during this period the works team have:

- Topped up the play bark at Fieldmere and Oxlease.
- The Leys play area has had a lot of ground repair, turfing and reseeding works carried out by the works team.
- And they are currently carrying out repairs to play equipment and wet pour safer surfaces at all sites.
- Play Area inspections are taking place to ensure all equipment is safe when lockdown restrictions are relaxed, and RoSPA are booked to come and carry out the annual inspections later in the month.

**Skate Park:** At the time of writing this report, the skate park is currently closed, but it is hoped it will be open again with appropriate signage etc. prior to this meeting, in line with government guidelines.

**Splashpark:** The splash park was prepared to open for the Easter Holidays as agreed by Council, however due to the lockdown restrictions imposed it has not been able to open to the public and is currently shut down. The Maintenance Company will still need to visit at the end of the season whether the pad has or has not been used to carry out the relevant de-commissioning for the winter.

**Hard Court Areas:** Hard Court areas at Burwell and King Georges Field have been re-opened with appropriate signage in place for Social Distancing etc in line with government guidelines.

**Tennis:** Tennis at both West Witney under Witney Lawn Tennis and the Leys under Parks Tennis have resumed again under Government and the Lawn Tennis Association Covid 19 Guidance.

**Crazy Golf:** This facility operated by Parks Tennis has resumed at the Leys Recreation Ground under Government Covid 19 Guidance.

**Leys Recreation Ground Toilets:** These remain closed at this time as it is impossible to make suitable arrangements for social distancing within the toilets under current guidance. This is obviously an area of great concern considering the usage of the Leys Recreation Ground, however the public toilets run by WODC are open.

**Events:** With the exception of Witney Feast, all events have been cancelled. Witney Feast Operators Mr and Mrs Wilson believe that the event will still go ahead in September.

### **Environmental impact**

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

### **Risk**

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Obviously the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in undertaking a lot of risk assessments in order to put in place measures for safe operation of facilities including social distancing. This has been a big draw on the Council's resources and Officer time working through guidance etc.

### **Financial implications**

There has been some significant impact on the Council's budgets due to the COVID-19 situation such as loss of rental hire income from pitch hire as well as possible losses or expectations of rent reductions for tenants, whilst facilities have still had to be maintained by

the Council. The Town Clerk will be presenting a full report to the next Policy, Governance & Finance Committee.

**Recommendations**

Member are invited to note the report of the Operations & Estates Officer.



## SPORT AND PLAY COMMITTEE

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**Date:** Monday 22 June 2020

**Title:** Witney parkrun - Request for a Hogging Pathway

**Contact Officer:** Operations and Estates Officer – John Hickman

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### Background

The Witney Parkrun started in March 2018 and has been a huge success, average attendance is 242 per week, and it has wide ranging benefits to all ages. When Council agreed to Witney Parkrun the agreement was that it would have no financial cost or implications to the Council other than providing occasional small loads of topsoil in order for Witney parkrun to maintain the course. Witney parkrun would maintain the course spiking and levelling to maintain in good condition.

At the time it was pointed out that parts of the course were unsuitable for this type of event due to the ground conditions in wet weather. Consequently, due to the popularity of parkrun, damage has been caused particularly in the wet areas due to inclement weather conditions – this has also affected other users of the field, and quite early on the Council did receive some complaints from other users. Routes were therefore adapted to try and spread the wear on the ground with up to 4 different routes for use on different weeks in bad wear areas, however the wear in certain areas, particularly narrow parts of the course, is still quite substantial given the numbers running along the same line.

Recently Council has spent £3,995 + VAT removing the dead wood through the tree belts in order to avoid runners being injured by possible falling dead wood in winter months and windy conditions.

The Operations & Estates Officer has spent time dealing with other issues over toilets, refreshments, requests to alter routes, installation of a storage container, tree works etc.

### Current Situation

From the annual report attached Members will note that parkrun had to cancel 13 events between November 2019 and the start of lock down compared to only 1 during the same period in 2018. However, 2018/19 was a very dry winter whereas 2019/20 was a very wet one. From experience of the area concerned it is normal on most years for us to lose the football pitch in this area between November and March due to waterlogged conditions. It is unusual when this is not the case, which is why Councillors and parkrun were advised initially that the area was unsuitable for this type of event particularly in the winter months.

At the request of parkrun, the Operations & Estates Officer met with the Event Director to discuss adjusting the route and also winter proofing the site.

The Operations & Estates Officer discussed putting a hogging path in and suggested this should run right across the eastern side of the field as well as the southern side as the eastern side can become extremely wet as well. The route along the southern side would need to be moved from between the tree belt to between the trees and the boundary fence as it would not be possible to have a hogging path between the trees in the tree belt.

The Operations & Estates Officer also advised that the hogging path should not use wood chip as used in the woodland area as this would give severe issues later if used in this situation, and would not resolve the issue in the long term. He advised that a compacted gravel or stone should be used to form any hogging path within path edgings of either wood or concrete.

Subsequently the attached request/proposal was received.

It should be remembered Councillors and Officers are currently trying to make large changes to the sports facilities at West Witney 4G pitch etc. Any works carried out now may not be appropriate if or when the other associated alterations to pitches etc. on site are carried out.

It should also be noted winter proofing the course in West Witney Grounds is not going to winter proof the other areas outside of WTC control that are also issues in wet weather I.E. the verge alongside the main Road which is badly damaged every time the weather is wet. So even if West Witney's parkrun course is winter proofed, several areas of the rest of the course will not be and events may still get cancelled due to wet conditions.

### **Footpath Construction**

Officers will need to design the footpath accordingly and it will need to be constructed in a suitable manner in order to withstand the level of use by parkrun for years to come. The path will need to be a minimum of 1.500mm in order for runners to run alongside one another and also to allow a wheelchair and person walking alongside to use the path.

The ground will need to be dug out to a minimum of 150mm with ground stabilisation material placed underneath wooden or concrete edging to either side, a suitable base stone compacted 100mm deep with a compacted gravel top layer of 50mm. Spoil will need to be suitably disposed of.

The Operations and Estates Officer would suggest the path sits approx. 50mm above existing ground level in order to try to prevent future flooding of the path and that the ground is sloped up to the top off path edge and reseeded to give a easily maintainable edge to the path and field.

It is not simply a case of spreading gravel on the existing ground and compacting.

Care will need to be taken to avoid damaging tree roots within the existing tree belt in order to prevent loss of trees that are protected under the covenant on the site.

The path should also be suitably strong enough to sustain the weight of any equipment used to maintain the field.

### **Environmental impact**

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

### **Risk**

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Members should be mindful of the impact projects have on all its resources, including staffing especially at this time of COVID-19 when Officers are already extremely busy working through government guidance to enable its own facilities to re-open and operate safely.

### **Financial implications**

The Council receives no income from parkrun, and it has no specific budget for these types of works.

It would appear from parkrun's funding statement included in the proposal, Parkrun cannot permit them to raise funds for course maintenance.

- But can from its community support council in finding solutions to improve the ground conditions.
- Parkrun can help identify funding opportunities and support council in applying for them.
- Parkrun can also assist by encouraging local donations of equipment materials and labour.

Funding: The parkrun HQ policies do not permit any parkrun to raise funds for course maintenance. Witney parkrun can, however, utilise good will from within its community to support the Council in finding solutions to improve ground conditions for all. Representatives of Witney parkrun can help the council identify possible funding opportunities, such as GLL Community Grants, and support the council applying for the funds. The Witney parkrun community can also assist the Council in encouraging local donations of material, equipment and labour.

Witney parkrun proposes the council's direction to ensure services and contractors are approved by the council.

There would be a cost implication from Officers/Staff time initially, and could be considerable cost implications to council if sufficient funding or donations are not gained for the associated works.

## **Recommendations**

Members are invited to note the report and consider the proposal from Witney parkrun for winter proofing the parkrun course, and if in agreement consider how it would be funded and the other resource implications.

Witney parkrun  
c/o Mrs P Owens

24 April 2020

To: Witney Town Council – Halls and Green Spaces Committee

Cllr. Vicky Gwatkin  
Mr. John Hickman

Re: Witney parkrun Annual Report and Winterproofing Plan

Dear Cllr. Gwatkin; Mr. J. Hickman

Please accept this letter and attached annual report as submission to the agenda for the next committee meeting, yet to be scheduled.

Witney parkrun would like to respectfully request the committee consider the following:

- 1) A review of the plan in Appendix 1 of this report which discusses winter-proofing

## **Witney parkrun Annual Report – Year 2 (2019/2020)**

### **Context:**

parkrun organise free, weekly, 5km timed runs around the world. They are open to everyone, free, and are safe and easy to take part in. These events take place in pleasant parkland surroundings and encourage people of every ability to take part; from those taking their first steps in running to Olympians; from juniors to those with more experience; all are welcome. Witney parkrun is one of 6491 parkruns (this is ~16% increase in events year on year). Since parkrun began 2,152,618 participants have run a combined distance of 151,842,770 km. The highest ever attendance is 2,545 at Bushy Parkrun with an average attendance across all parkruns of 206.

parkrun is a run, not a race and winning is not the main priority, runners are timed and being able to compare their own time with previous weeks is the benchmark for a successful run, jog or walk although many participants just take part for enjoyment and fitness without any concern for their time.

Witney was the first parkrun in West Oxfordshire, and it has now been joined by Chipping Norton School who launched in December 2019. We are also neighboured by Harcourt Hill (10m), Oxford (10.7m), Abingdon (13.2m), Fire Service College (15.5m), Didcot (17m), Bicester (17.1m) and Seven Fields (18.2m)

In England and Wales all parkruns start at 9am and are run every Saturday.

### **Summary**

Overall, our second year has demonstrated successful organic growth on year 1. Thanks go to Witney Town Council, West Oxfordshire District Council, OXSPA, Witney Woodland Volunteers, West Witney Sports & Social club and Blenheim Estates for their continued support of the event.

Incidental costs are met by donations and the event continues to be free and open to everyone every Saturday. (Subject to landowner consent and/or cancellations due to weather or other events in the park/wood).

The event has however suffered significant cancellations due to an extremely wet winter which in turn resulted in a flooded and water-logged sports ground. As a result, to ensure preservation of the park and participant safety, there have been a total of 13 cancellations since November 2019, compared to only one for the same period in 2018. All parkrun events in the UK were suspended as of 21<sup>st</sup> March due to government guidelines and Covid-19. Witney parkrun's current licence expires on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2023.

### **Number of Events in 2019/20**

The possible number of Saturday parkruns from 01 January 2019 until 7<sup>th</sup> March 2020 was 64. It was necessary to cancel 13 events, due to adverse weather and ground conditions. We did not hold an event on 25<sup>th</sup> Dec 2019 and did hold a special extra event on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020. There has been a total of 89 events since our initial start date in March 2018. 2

### **Attendance**

Our average event attendance is 242.5 compared to 217 in 2018/2019 participants although this varies depending on the weather, holidays etc. Our largest attendance has been 393 for event 64 on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2019. This was the Woodgreen PTA takeover. This has surpassed the previous largest attendance of 354 on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2018 in support of LibFest. 2

4,934 different athletes ran a total of 21,581 times giving a total of 107,905 km (Date point: 1st April 2020).

### **Volunteers and Registrations**

A minimum of 14 volunteers are required each week and they are mainly drawn from the participants, although we have a few who have never participated yet support the event each week. We have also had 16 local secondary school students participating in the voluntary section of their Duke of Edinburgh Awards with us. 10 of those have completed their requirements across a mixture of Bronze and Silver levels, and a further six are still working towards completing their requirement for volunteering.





271 different people volunteered a total of 1,167 times this year. The volunteers have included (supervised) children from age 8 and adults up to age 75 3

	Ever	Past Year	Year to Date	Past Month	Month to Date	Past Week
<b>Registrations</b>	3752	1217	179	14	0	1
<b>Runs</b>	21,518	9746	571	0	0	0
<b>Participants</b>	4934	2702	426	0	0	0
<b>Volunteer Occasions</b>	2850	1285	84	0	0	0
<b>Volunteers</b>	485	291	51	0	0	0

### Milestones

parkrun rewards the dedication and commitment of our most regular runners and volunteers.

All participants who complete 50 runs are awarded a 50 Club T-shirt; those who complete 100 receive the 100 T-Shirt; those who complete 250 runs receive a 250 T-shirt; and complete 500 runs to receive the 500 T-shirt. Every parkrunner who has registered is eligible for the clubs.

A **10** club T-shirt is also awarded to junior runners (aged 17 and under at the time of 10th run) when they have completed 10 runs in the Saturday 5k events.

Finally there is also **Volunteer club**, which rewards anyone who volunteers on 25 different occasions. Those who reach this milestone can claim a free 25 volunteer t-shirt.



Sometimes it takes a while for parkrun to process the official t-shirts. Therefore, Witney parkrun invested in a series of milestone bibs, thanks to a grant awarded by The Bartlett Trust, to provide reward and recognition on the day the participant is achieving their milestone. The individual gets to wear their bib for the duration of the event.



### **Pacer Event**

Witney parkrun has also successfully held pacer event during the drier months on the first Saturday of each month. The events always receive very positive feedback. The pacer events give people the opportunity to improve their pace/time with the help of a pacer.





### **Open to all**

Our age range was from 4 years to over 80.

We have two course records:

Female record holder: Cas JACKSON - 19:19 - Event 54 (13/04/19)

Male record holder: Ross BRADEN - 16:57 - Event 59 (18/05/19)

And many others jogging and walking the course in around an hour. We are equally supportive of fast and slower participants and we have a mandatory tail walker each week who ensures no one gets left behind on the course.



### **Social**

The social aspect of parkrun is as important as the event itself and we encourage participants to stay after the event for a drink and a chat. The West Witney Sports and Social Club (WWSSC) committee has unfortunately not been able to offer a sustained beverage or snack option, however we continue to work with the new committee for options in the future. Ideally, we would like to keep participants in the vicinity to encourage social engagement.

Witney parkrun and UE Coffee tested a food and beverage service with the permission of Witney Town Council. However, adverse weather made this a challenge. Therefore, for now, UE coffee offers a discount for anyone who participates in parkrun and we encourage participants to go to the café premises for post parkrun drinks, snack and chats. The parkrun annual Christmas Social was held at UE Coffee in December 2019.

Since March 2020, WWSSC committee have closed the glasshouse for refurbishment being funded by The Swifts Cricket Team. It has been by used parkrun since launch for managing volunteers etc. Going forward, WWSSC will charge a fee for its use. As parkrun is a volunteer run, payment of fees will not be possible. We would however, like to thank WWSSC for its use to date.

### **Community Partnerships**

Witney parkrun continues to encourage local community groups to "takeover" the event. We held a very successful Wood Green School takeover which resulted in our highest ever attendance. This takeover was in aid of Wood Green School PTA'S £50K Challenge in which they are aiming to raise £50,000 to support the school's Library, Sports & Well-Being and Drama offerings. Though no fundraising took place during their takeover, it gave the school PTA opportunity to promote their plans with the Witney parkrun community.

Wood Green School also very kindly donated their school premises to host a Defibrillator/AED training session for parkrun and local communities in January 2020. The training was delivered free to us by First for Safety Oxfordshire



Ltd and was attended by about a dozen people. This is lifesaving training especially with an AED unit available at West Witney.



Witney parkrun has a strong partnership with Witney Woodland volunteers creating a new path in 2018 and spreading wood chip through the woods in early 2020, now affectionately referred to as the “woodchip carpet”. These areas are now also enjoyed by the general public.







We also have close connections with Witney Road Runners, Thames Valley Police, Wychwood Hockey Team, Witney Music festival, Witney Radio, BBC Radio Oxford and Witney Foodbank.

Witney parkrun aims to dedicate at least two events for a foodbank collection for Witney and West Oxfordshire Food Bank of which one is our birthday event in March. To date, there have been three events: Dec 2018 143kg / £250; March 2019 192.5kg / £336.79; Aug 2019 158kg / £276. (March 2020 event was unfortunately cancelled.)

Lastly, we have two parkrun practices affiliated to Witney parkrun. Namely, The Windrush Medical Practice and The Nuffield Practice. RAF Brize Norton Medical Centre is in the process of their application with the parkrun practice scheme is run in conjunction with the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) s

### **Conclusion**

Witney parkrun continues to be a positive addition to Witney and each week welcomes existing and new participants. Many friendships have been formed and it also serves as an additional way to support those who may need it. Having adjusted the route to avoid the area which gets particularly muddy and boggy, with the support of Witney Town Council, West Oxfordshire District Council and Witney Woodland Volunteers, the course is now more robust enabling an even more sustainable event. However, the extremely wet winter has caused waterlogging, and this is further discussed in Appendix 1.

There are many broader aspects of parkrun: mental and physical wellbeing, volunteer opportunities, regular meetings and social interactions, a truly inclusive event for all ages and abilities which has forged deep community connections and partnerships within Witney.





### **Core Team**

As the event has evolved, the core team have been working on building sustainability:

- 1) Event directorship has changed to co-event directors
- 2) 3 new run directors have been trained and added to the team
- 3) 2 run directors have stepped down
- 4) 2 members of the team have been appointed as a parkrun Ambassador's for Oxfordshire. (responsible for mentoring existing events and starting new events in the region).

Co Event Directors and Run Directors: Punam Owens and Fraser Howard

Run Director: Dan Wymer

Run Director: Sally Howard

Run Director: James Field

Run Director: Ally Jones

Run Director: Stephen Roberts

Volunteer Coordinator: Tamsyn Wymer

parkrun Ambassadors for Oxfordshire: Dan Wymer (appointed March 2019) and Punam Owens (Appointed Feb 2020)

### **Data Sources (April 2020)**

1 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Parkruns\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_Kingdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Parkruns_in_the_United_Kingdom)

2 <http://www.parkrun.org.uk/Witney/results/eventhistory/>

3 [https://wiki.parkrun.com/index.php/Witney\\_parkrun](https://wiki.parkrun.com/index.php/Witney_parkrun)

4 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p06ryxmp>

5 <http://www.rcgp.org.uk/clinical-and-research/our-programmes/clinical-priorities/parkrun-practice.aspx>

### **Photo Credits**

Trish Davies, Cereta Drewett and Witney parkrun core team.



## **Appendix 1:**

### **Winter-Proofing Plan**

Moving into 2020, and once out of the current pandemic crisis, Witney parkrun wishes to prioritise work with the council to "winterproof" the course ahead of winter 2020.

Fraser Howard met with John Hickman on site 13<sup>th</sup> Feb 2020 and discussed the waterlogged areas. A positive discussion was had with agreement for changes that would make a significant difference to how resilient the sports field would be to winter weather. In short, the changes entail a hoggin path on the South and East edges of the sports field, adjacent to the boundary (indicated in yellow on map below). This would benefit not only parkrun, but other users of the sports field as well. John also suggested the paths join up with the existing entrance in the South East corner to improve access for pedestrians from Deer Park.

For context, in the same period last year compared to the period of cancellations in year 2, the event averaged 236 participants and 28 volunteers each week. With an average time at 31:05, this equates to 1589 hours of exercise lost and over 364 hours of volunteering opportunity lost.

#### **Funding:**

The parkrun HQ policies do not permit any parkrun to raise funds for course maintenance. Witney parkrun can, however, utilise good will from within its community to support the Council in finding solutions to improve ground conditions for all.

Representatives of Witney parkrun can help the council identify possible funding opportunities, such as GLL Community Grants, and support the council applying for the funds. The Witney parkrun community can also assist the Council in encouraging local donations of material, equipment and labour.

Witney parkrun proposes the council's direction to ensure services and contractors are approved by the council.

#### **Proposed Plan:**







# Agenda Item 9

**Witney Sports Facilities –  
Options Paper**

**Prepared for Witney Town  
Council**

**V1.0**

**Consult QRD Ltd  
55 East Street  
Faversham  
ME13 8AF  
Tel: 01227 390194**

**March 2020**

**RG/1100/2020**



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# **1 Introduction**

## **1.1 Scope and Purpose**

- 1.1.1 The primary focus of this report is to assist Witney Town Council (“WTC”, “the Council”) in identifying options to address the current outdoor sports facility needs in the town as well as providing a consideration of the future needs, associated with population growth.
- 1.1.2 Under the former, the issues relate primarily to quality, although there are some access and capacity issues.
- 1.1.3 Under the latter, the key consideration will be to ensure that there is adequate capacity. Ensuring these future needs are met will, in large part, be linked to West Oxfordshire District Council (“WODC”, “the District Council”) planning policy. However, having a better understanding of needs and priorities at a local level will help to shape where and how any investment related to housing growth is delivered.
- 1.1.4 This report, through a review of demographic and pitch facility information will help the Town Council to develop a list of priority projects.

## **1.2 Witney Town Council Sports Facilities Overview**

- 1.2.1 The Town Council has responsibility for the hire and maintenance of sports pitch facilities at the following locations:
  - The Leys Recreation Ground – a venue for cricket and football served by a pavilion building. Due to issues with pitch quality, we have been advised that the adult pitch is no longer available for hire. The Leys is also the venue for the annual fair and has a range of other facilities for formal and informal sport and physical recreation.
  - Queen Elizabeth II (QE2) Field Burwell – a venue for football served by a community hall with changing rooms.
  - King George V (KGV) Playing Field – a venue for football, no changing facilities are on site. This site is protected by a Fields in Trust covenant.
  - West Witney Sports Ground – a venue for football and cricket served by a large pavilion building. There are also tennis and bowls facilities on the wider site. WE understand that there have been long-term issues with the viability of the site.
- 1.2.2 The facility mix and condition at the above sites are considered further in Sections 3 and 4, along with an overview of other venues in Witney and, where relevant, the immediate surrounding area.

## **1.3 Report Structure**

- 1.3.1 The remainder of the report is structured as follows:
  - Section 2 – West Witney and the West Oxfordshire Area
  - Section 3 – Sports Facilities
  - Section 4 – Key Issues and Options
  - Section 5 – Summary and Recommendations.

## 2 Witney and the West Oxfordshire Area

### 2.1 Purpose

- 2.1.1 Developing an understanding of the local profile, considering existing sports facility provision, demographic information and sports participation information will assist in the development of any future investment options that may help to improve financial sustainability.

### 2.2 West Oxfordshire Local Insight Profile

- 2.2.1 Prepared by Sport England and Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion the Local Insight profile for WODC was generated in September 2019. OCSI collect and collate data from more than 50 government agencies, using the findings to provide key social and economic indicators. Some key information is highlighted below.
- 2.2.2 Starting with **Population** statistics, of the total population of 109,265<sup>1</sup>, 21.2% are aged 65+ compared to the average for England of 18%. The proportion aged 0-15 is a little lower than the national average (18.5% in WODC, 19.1% in England). 60.4 % of the population is of working age, compared to 62.8% across England as a whole. When considering ethnicity and country of birth, 92.6% of the local population is White British, compared to 79.8% in England<sup>2</sup>; 97.5% of the population were born in England, compared to 83.5% in England.
- 2.2.3 Turning to **People out of Work**, as of April 2019, the WODC area has rates of Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) and Universal Credit (UC) below the average for England, 1.2% locally, compared to 2.8% nationally. Youth unemployment (18-24) is at 1.8% locally, compared to the average for England of 3.8%. For older claimants (aged 50+) the local rate is 0.5% compared to 1.2% nationally. Finally, the Incapacity Benefits claimants rate stands at 2.4% compared to 5.0% nationally.
- 2.2.4 In terms of **Disability** statistics, 10.6% of residents claim Attendance Allowance, 3% of people receive Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and 1.8% claim Disability Living Allowance, compared to 13.1%, 5.2% and 2.5% of the population of England as a whole<sup>3</sup>.
- 2.2.5 According to **Indices of Multiple Deprivation** data, 0% of the WODC population live in the most deprived 20% of areas in England, this compares to 20% of the population of England<sup>4</sup>.
- 2.2.6 Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) data (2016) shows that 8.1% of **Children** live in poverty, compared to an average for England of 17%. DWP data (February 2019) shows that 7.1% of **Pensioners** are Pension Credit claimants, compared to 13.6% of the population across England as a whole.

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<sup>1</sup> Office for National Statistics (ONS) mid-year estimate 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Census 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Department for Work & Pensions (July 2019).

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (Indices of Deprivation 2019)

- 2.2.7 Recorded **Crime** statistics show an average of 51.2 crimes per 1,000 population in WODC, compared to 117.5 across England in the period from June 2018 to May 2019. The average rate is lower across all crime typologies.
- 2.2.8 Turning to **Life Expectancy and Mortality**, the average life expectancy for men is 82 (79 across England) and 85 for women (83 across England)<sup>5</sup>. The data also shows that there are lower than average mortality rates linked to cancer, coronary heart disease, circulatory disease, respiratory disease and stroke.
- 2.2.9 Data for **General Health and Limiting Long-Term Illness** shows that 0% of the WODC population live in health deprivation hotspots (19.8% average for England), and that 14.5% have a limiting long-term illness (17.6% in England as a whole)<sup>6</sup>.
- 2.2.10 According to the Active Lives survey, 20% of the WODC population is **Physically Inactive**<sup>7</sup>, compared to 24% of the population of England; 69% of the population was active for at least 150 minutes per week, compared to 64% of the population of England.
- 2.2.11 ONS data (2015/16) shows that the average **Household Income** across WODC is £51,569, somewhat above the average for England (£42,184).
- 2.2.12 The **Classification of Neighbourhoods**<sup>8</sup> shows that 15.4% of the population meets the definition of “Hard Pressed Living”:
- “Mostly on the fringe of the UK’s urban areas, particularly in Wales and the North of England. High levels of people in terraced accommodation, high unemployment, low ethnic diversity, high levels of people employed in manufacturing.”*
- 2.2.13 This compares to 17.2% of the population of England.
- 2.2.14 The largest group (36.7%) is “Urbanites”:
- “Predominantly in urban areas with high concentrations in southern England. More likely to live in either flats or terraces that are privately rented.”*
- 2.2.15 This compares to 18.6% of the population of England.
- 2.2.16 The second largest group (30.1%) is “Rural Residents”:
- “Rural areas, sparsely populated, above average employment in agriculture, higher number owning multiple cars, an older married population, a high provision of unpaid care and an above average number of people living in communal establishments.”*
- 2.2.17 This compares to 10.5% of the population of England.

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<sup>5</sup> ONS 2013-2017.

<sup>6</sup> Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Sport England Active Lives Survey 2019. Defined as undertaking less than 30 minutes of activity in the last month, including gardening.

<sup>8</sup> ONS 2011.

## 2.3 Witney Population Growth

- 2.3.1 To provide an understanding of how demand for sports facilities may increase over the coming years, we have reviewed the population projections prepared by Oxfordshire Insight. Table 1 provides a summary of the projected growth in the period to 2027 in the WODC wards, using a 2017 forecast as the baseline. This clearly shows that the majority of the growth will be in the Witney West area.

**Table 1 – Witney Projected Population Growth**

Ward	Middle Super Output Area	Population		Change
		2017	2027	
Witney East	EO2006000	12,067	12,495	428
Witney Central	EO2006002	10,796	10,349	-447
Witney West	EO2006001	5,899	8,240	2,341
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>28,762</b>	<b>31,084</b>	<b>2,322</b>

- 2.3.2 Table 2 provides a summary of forecast population change in the surrounding wards. Although outside of the Town Council area these wards may contribute to some of the demand for facilities in the Town. These wards are forecast to have an even more significant growth in population.

**Table 2 – Surrounding Area Project Population Growth.**

Ward	Middle Super Output Area	Population		Change
		2017	2027	
Minster Lovell	EO2005999	6,310	9,007	2,697
Eynsham West	EO2005997	5,533	9,186	3,653
Charlbury	EO2006003	5,551	5,605	54
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>17,394</b>	<b>23,798</b>	<b>6,404</b>

- 2.3.3 Tables 3 and 4 provide an analysis of the forecast growth in population broken down by key age groups in both Witney and in the surrounding wards.

**Table 3 – Witney Population Growth by Age Group**

Age Group	2017	2027	Change
0-16	5,924	6,098	174
17-45	10,501	10,269	-232
46-65	7,206	7,975	769
66+	5,131	6,742	1,611
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>28,762</b>	<b>31,084</b>	<b>2,322</b>

**Table 4 – Surrounding Area Population Growth by Age Group**

Age Group	2017	2027	Change
0-16	3,245	4,312	1,067
17-45	4,683	7,755	3,072
46-65	5,359	6,555	1,196
66+	4,107	5,176	1,069
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17,394</b>	<b>23,798</b>	<b>6,404</b>

- 2.3.4 It is interesting to note that in the Witney area, the forecast is for a net fall in the population aged 45 and below, with all growth in the age groups aged 46 in and above, these groups are perhaps less likely to access outdoor sports pitches.
- 2.3.5 However, in the surrounding area, there is forecast to be growth in all age groups, with 65% in groups aged 45 and below, those that are likely to generate the most demand for sports pitches.

## **2.4 Summary**

- 2.4.1 The Witney area is, when compared to the average for England, more prosperous and with residents that have above average levels of participation in physical activity as well as below average levels of Limiting Long-Term Illness.
- 2.4.2 However, the population is older than the average for England, a position that, according to the population projections, is likely to become entrenched over the coming years in Witney itself. The growth in the surrounding area is likely to be mainly in younger age groups.

### 3 Sports Facilities

#### 3.1 Outdoor Sports Pitches in Witney

- 3.1.1 We have used the Active Places Power database, the FA Pitchfinder tool and information provided by the Town Council to identify all outdoor sports pitches in the Witney area. These are detailed in Table 5.

**Table 5 – Witney Outdoor Sports Pitches**

Site Name	Facility Sub Type	Unit	Number	Access Type
BURWELL RECREATION GROUND	Adult Football	Pitches	2	Public Access
BURWELL RECREATION GROUND	Junior Football 9v9	Pitches	2	Public Access
BURWELL RECREATION GROUND	Mini Soccer	Pitches	5	Public Access
KING GEORGE V PLAYING FIELD (WITNEY)	Adult Football	Pitches	1	Public Access
LEYS RECREATION GROUND	Cricket	Pitches	1	Public Access
LEYS RECREATION GROUND	Junior Football 11v11	Pitches	1	Public Access
LEYS RECREATION GROUND	Mini Soccer	Pitches	1	Public Access
RALEIGH CRESCENT	Junior Football 11v11	Pitches	1	Public Access
THE HENRY BOX SCHOOL	Senior Rugby Union	Pitches	2	Private Use
THE HENRY BOX SCHOOL	Adult Football	Pitches	2	Private Use
WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND	Adult Football	Pitches	2	Public Access
WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND	Cricket	Pitches	1	Public Access
WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND	Mini Soccer	Pitches	5	Public Access
WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND	Junior Football 9v9	Pitches	2	Public Access
WITNEY ARTIFICIAL TURF PITCH	Rubber crumb pile (3G)	Pitches	1	Public Access
WITNEY MILLS CRICKET CLUB	Cricket	Pitches	1	Public Access
WITNEY MILLS CRICKET CLUB	Junior Football 11v11	Pitches	1	Public Access
WOOD GREEN SCHOOL	Sand Dressed Artificial	Pitches	1	Public Access
WOOD GREEN SCHOOL	Senior Rugby Union	Pitches	2	Private Use
WOOD GREEN SCHOOL	Cricket	Pitches	1	Private Use
WOOD GREEN SCHOOL PITCHES	Adult Football	Pitches	2	Public Access
WOOD GREEN SCHOOL PITCHES	Mini Soccer	Pitches	2	Public Access

- 3.1.2 The provision is further summarised in Table 6. The Town Council is responsible for 81% of the grass football pitches with public access and 67% of the cricket pitches with public access.

**Table 6 – Summary of Witney Sports Pitch Provision by Type and Access**

Pitch Type	Total	Public Access	Private Access
Adult 11v11 Football	9	7	2
Junior 11v11 Football	3	3	0
Junior 9v9 Football	4	4	0
Mini Soccer	13	13	0
Cricket	4	3	1
Rugby Union	4	0	4
3G Football	1	1	0
Artificial Hockey	1	1	0

3.1.3 Witney Rugby Club's ground is located outside of the boundary of the Town Council area.

## 3.2 Strategies

3.2.1 When prepared in accordance with Sport England guidance, Playing Pitch Strategies provide an assessment of playing pitch provision and future needs. They form an evidence base to protect, enhance and provide playing pitch and ancillary facilities, helping to guide investment and inform sports infrastructure contributions associated with housing developments.

3.2.2 The current WODC Playing Pitch Strategy was completed in February 2014. Consequently, it does not provide the most up to date picture, nevertheless it is the best analysis available.

3.2.3 We understand that the District Council is in the process of updating the document, although timescales for completion are unclear. Given the scale of work required to complete a Playing Pitch Strategy, and the fact that the District Council is in the process of updating the PPS, we do not recommend that the Town Council completes its own detailed supply and demand analysis.

3.2.4 Key PPS issues in the Witney area were identified as follows:

- **West Witney** – Poor drainage at site and poor and insufficient changing facilities for numbers of teams and for the ladies' team. Not enough car parking. Cricket: poor outfield resulting from overlapping sports and seasons. concerns about its ability to cope with both existing and potential future demands as the site was identified as being "overplayed"<sup>9</sup>
- **The Leys** – Football: Changing facilities deemed to be very poor and not big enough for the number of teams. Dog-fouling and litter are issues. Cricket: variable opinion on the part of the clubs using the cricket pitch. However, the pavilion/changing block is not considered to be good. Some overuse for cricket.
- **King George V Playing Field** – Football: Lack of changing facilities on site, and the low quality of the playing surface<sup>10</sup>.
- **QE2 Field (Burwell)** – Football: Insufficient changing facilities, and the low quality of the playing surface. Some overplay by mini-soccer teams.
- **Wood Green School Pitches**<sup>11</sup> – There are reported issues with the drainage of these pitches.
- **Facility Provision** - The PPS concluded that there was sufficient capacity to meet peak time demand in the Witney area for adult football. However, a shortage in provision for junior football and mini soccer. However, there was an acknowledgement that much of the junior use if accommodated on over-marked adult pitches (as is the case at Burwell).
- **Funding** – lack of available funding to address many of the identified issues.

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<sup>9</sup> i.e. hosting more matches than the pitches can support.

<sup>10</sup> The PPS identifies the potential for teams to access changing facilities at Wood Green School.

<sup>11</sup> Identified as Madley Park in the PPS.

- 3.2.5 Our understanding is that the majority of the issues identified in the PPS remain unaddressed<sup>12</sup>, however, the Witney Synthetic Turf Pitch has been resurfaced with a 3G carpet suitable for football. This offers the potential to support both training and competitive uses. However, as highlighted in Section 3.3 there appears to be very limited use of the site as a venue for competitive football at weekends.
- 3.2.6 The **WODC Local Football Facility Plan** (LFFP) is in the final stages of development. When it complete, it will identify “*opportunities to accurately target investment in football facilities across the local area*”. The document had been developed by consultants KKP with support from a range of stakeholders including WODC District Council, Oxfordshire FA, the Football Foundation and Sport England.
- 3.2.7 The LFFP will not be a detailed supply and demand analysis. Instead it will be an investment portfolio and “10-year vision to transform local football facilities” that builds on existing evidence and strategic plans. Based on consultation with the Football Foundation we understand that 90% of the organisation’s funding will be directed towards projects identified in the LFFP.
- 3.2.8 We do not yet know the priorities in detail. However, we understand that additional 3G Artificial Grass pitch capacity has been identified as being a key requirement in the Witney area. Most notably for floodlit training, although this would also offer increased (durable) capacity at weekends.
- 3.2.9 Furthermore, we have been advised by KKP that the following projects have been raised by the Town Council for inclusion in the LFFP:
- **West Witney** – improvements to the changing pavilion and grass pitches. Potential location for a 3G Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP)
  - **QE2 Field** (Burwell) – improved changing room accommodation.
  - **King George V Playing Field** – pitch improvements<sup>13</sup>.
- 3.2.10 We have been advised that no specific improvements have been identified at The Leys. We suggest that the Council may wish to reconsider this.

### 3.3 Current Facility Use

- 3.3.1 To assist in understanding how the football facilities in the town are currently used, we have reviewed team affiliation data provided by Oxfordshire FA. Key facts for the Town Council’s facilities:
- Spartan Rangers A list King George V Field as the home ground
  - 5 teams from Witney Vikings Youth list The Leys as the home ground
  - Witney Royals First Team and Reserves list the QE2 field as the home ground
  - 14 team from Witney Vikings youth list the QE2 Field as the home ground
  - FC Mills First Team list West Witney as the home ground
  - 20 teams from Tower Hill FC and Tower Hills Ladies list West Witney as the home ground.

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<sup>12</sup> We understand that some pitch improvements have taken place at QE2 following a visit from the FA Regional Pitch Advisor.

<sup>13</sup> As a single pitch site, this is likely to be a low priority for the Football Foundation.



3.3.2 Affiliated football is also played at the following venues in the Town:

- Witney Mills Cricket Club – 3 teams from Witney Vikings Youth
- The Henry Box School – Spartan Rangers First Team and Reserves
- Witney Synthetic Turf Pitch (3G) – 2 teams from Witney Vikings Youth, 9 teams playing in the Oxfordshire FA Flexi (midweek) League and a Walking Football Team.

3.3.3 Wood Green School is listed as a reserve home ground for some of the Witney Vikings teams.

3.3.4 The full breakdown is included as Appendix 1. Oxfordshire FA have advised that the Witney area is strong in terms of the number of teams.

### **3.4 Planned Outdoor Sports Facilities**

3.4.1 WODC Planning Policy EH5 (Sport, Recreation and Children's Play) states that *"Where appropriate, development will be expected to provide or contribute towards the provision of necessary improvements to open space, sports and recreational buildings and land"*.

3.4.2 As well as new provision, the Policy also highlights the potential for schools and other organisations to make facilities available to the wider community.

3.4.3 We have been made aware of the following sports facility developments and/or financial contributions to new sports facilities in the Witney Town Council area:

- Contribution of £840,000 to be used for a new 3G pitch (planning reference 16/01450/OUT). Location to be confirmed; the Town Council has requested that the funds be used at West Witney. However, through consultation with Oxfordshire FA, we understand that the proposed secondary school in West Witney could be an alternative location.
- Development of two football pitches and changing pavilion (planning reference 19/03044/Res). This project could link to the proposed secondary school in West Witney. If so, the pavilion may not be built as a standalone facility. We understand that the Town Council has expressed some interest in managing these pitches should the school project not progress.

3.4.4 We note the Town Council's interest in accessing the 3G AGP funding. However, daytime use of 3G pitches is typically a key consideration in deciding where to locate these facilities. Consequently, if the school project progresses, we would suggest that County and District Councils may choose to put the 3G pitch on that site.

3.4.5 Regarding the two-pitch site, were this to be available as a standalone facility, it is questionable whether it would be financially viable in its own right. Therefore, we would urge the Town Council to proceed with caution before agreeing to adopt these pitches. A clear understanding of the ongoing costs should be in place.

3.4.6 Based on the requirements of Policy EH5 we conclude that any demand generated in the area surrounding Witney that is associated with new housing development will need to be delivered in those areas.

3.4.7 Other sources of Section106 funds are considered in Section 4.

### **3.5 Health and Fitness Provision**

3.5.1 We note that one of the key issues at West Witney is viability. Consequently, we have considered what other revenue generating facilities could form part of the facility mix to improve sustainability. We note that there is interest in developing a 3G AGP on the site, but there may be merit in including other (additional or alternative) facilities.

3.5.2 A cost-effective and popular solution for many venues, including outdoor sports pitch sites is a health and fitness facility. This is evidenced by their successful inclusion in many of the Football Association's Parklife football hubs.

3.5.3 Whilst Witney is too small to form part of the Parklife programme, there may be lessons that can be learned, and an appropriately sized health and fitness facility could cross-subsidise operation whether with or without a 3G AGP.

3.5.4 According to Active Places Power, health and fitness facilities are located at:

- Bartholomew Sports Centre – 35 stations
- Pirate Fitness – 59 stations
- Windrush Leisure Centre – 100 stations
- Witney Lakes Resort – 60 stations.

3.5.5 To provide an understanding of the local demand for health and fitness provision, we have undertaken a preliminary market analysis to provide a high-level understanding of whether new (appropriately sized) gym and studio facilities could be developed.

3.5.6 This is summarised in Table 7. The focus is on the population aged from 17 to 65 in Witney and the surrounding areas as set out in Section 2.

3.5.7 The penetration rate refers to the percentage of the national population that are members of health and fitness facilities. As detailed in the Local Insight Profile, the WODC population is, on average, more active than the population for England as a whole.

3.5.8 The Penetration Rate is the percentage of the population with a gym membership. In the UK, this stood at 11.9% in 2011, rising to 15.6% in 2019 (we have used the 2017 figure to coincide with the population data). The forecast for 2027 is a cautious assessment of possible growth, with a penetration rate still some way below that in other European countries.

**Table 7 – Witney Preliminary Health and Fitness Demand Analysis**

	<b>2017</b>	<b>2027</b>
<b>Witney and Surrounds 17-65 Population</b>	27,749	32,554
<b>Penetration Rate</b>	14.90%	18.50%
<b>Projected Potential Gym Membership</b>	4,135	6,022
<b>Average Members per Station</b>	20	20
<b>Estimated Health and Fitness Stations Demand</b>	207	301
<b>Existing Provision (Stations)</b>	254	254
<b>Surplus/- Shortfall</b>	47	-47

- 3.5.9 The preliminary analysis clearly suggests that there is likely to be unmet local demand for health and fitness provision in the Witney area in the period to 2027. This is worthy of further investigation via a Latent Demand Analysis.

### **3.6 Summary**

- 3.6.1 Overall, there is a good level of outdoor sports provision in the Witney area. Whilst the Town Council is clearly the most important provider, capacity exists on school sites. However, much of this is not currently available for use by the wider community.
- 3.6.2 Whilst relatively outdated, the PPS identifies some key issues that remain unaddressed. These mainly relate to overall quality of the pitches and ancillary facilities rather than the capacity (it is acknowledged that there are some localised, site-specific capacity issues).
- 3.6.3 Information relating to affiliated football reinforces the importance of the Town Council as a pitch provider.
- 3.6.4 New facilities will be provided to meet the additional needs generated by development. Whilst the timescales and (in the case of the 3G AGP) the location may not yet be certain, there does not appear to be any need for the Town Council to focus efforts on providing significant amounts of new capacity in its own right.
- 3.6.5 Finally, to address the key issue of viability at West Witney, there may be merit in considering additional facilities, most notably health and fitness provision, that could help cross-subsidise operation.

## 4 Summary and Next Steps

### 4.1 Key Issues

4.1.1 Having reviewed the available information, we have identified the following key issues:

- Viability, most notably at West Witney which has needed investment to safeguard future operation for a number of years. Additional uses, such as Health and Fitness should be considered.
- Playing surface quality. Improvements would support current use and reduce the periods when the pitches are unplayable. Although, it is important to note that investment should be proportionate, particularly at The Leys where other uses could damage any new drainage infrastructure.
- Ancillary facilities. Changing rooms are either dilapidated and/or under-sized.
- Access to School sites, most notably Wood Green School which has the potential to support community use, unlocking the potential of King George V Playing Field and the Wood Green School Pitches (Madeley Park) through access to changing room provision.

4.1.2 Based on the information available overall capacity does not seem to be a major cause for concern as any increased demand related to population growth will be addressed Section 106 agreements linked to the larger housing developments. Furthermore, in Witney itself, much of the forecast population growth is in the older age groups that are less likely to use outdoor sports pitches.

### 4.2 Funding

4.2.1 The **Town Council** has identified £168,416 for investment in sports facilities across Witney, as well as having a specific reserve of £75,000 for the QE2 Field. We have not considered the Public Works Loan Board at this stage.

4.2.2 We understand that the Town Council may be able to access **Section 106** funding totalling £295,000 from the Springfield Nurseries (£45,000) and Downs Rd/Curbridge (£250,000). As is typically the case with Section 106 funding it will be necessary to show how any new residents may benefit from a project, consequently, the QE2 Field may be the most appropriate location at which to spend fund related to Springfield Nurseries. The Downs Road/Curbridge funding may be best spent at West Witney.

4.2.3 Given the uncertainty about the recipient site for the £840,000 for a 3G pitch, we would urge the Council to take a cautious approach when factoring this into any calculations of available funding.

4.2.4 Recent (w/c 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2020) discussions with the **Football Foundation** have resulted in our reassessment of how the Council should approach funding applications.

- 4.2.5 Whilst a Town-wide approach will be welcomed, this should be cognisant of the fact that the Foundation's funding decisions are outcomes focused, i.e. the number of people playing football whether affiliated or not. As a result, 75% to 80% of funding will be focused on playing facilities, i.e. grass pitches, full-size 3G AGPs and small-sided Multi-Use Games Areas.
- 4.2.6 The remaining 20% to 25% will be spent on changing rooms and other ancillary facilities. Investment in these facilities should, ideally, demonstrate a clear link to the primary focus of participation, with changing room only projects unlikely to be a priority.
- 4.2.7 There is no specific maximum grant amount (although rarely above £500,000 at single 3G pitch sites); funding decisions are based on the merits of the project, i.e. the football development outcomes and/or whether it is a strategic priority. Typical partnership funding from applicants is approximately 40% of the eligible project cost.
- 4.2.8 The Foundation is also running a pilot project to fund medium-term (10-year) revenue funding for grass pitches. This is currently focused on sites where the pitches have been identified as being of Poor or Basic quality.

### 4.3 Recommendations

- 4.3.1 We have identified the following projects and/or approaches that would improve the overall access to outdoor sports pitches in the Witney area. As well as delivering investment facilities in its own right, the Council should work closely with the District Council, Oxfordshire FA and sports clubs to support and enable access to other facilities.
- 4.3.2 We have identified a total of 6 areas of activity that should be subject to further investigation' all Investment Options should be subject to a detailed understanding of the associated capital costs, funding package and revenue position.
- **Investment Option 1.** QE2 Field Burwell; develop proposals for enhanced changing room accommodation and improved grass pitches to provide increased carrying capacity (i.e. matches supported). Given the priorities of the Football Foundation, this project may be best suited to funding via a mix of S106 funding and the Council's own resources and is likely to be able to be delivered more quickly than other Investment Options.
  - **Investment Option 2.** West Witney; develop options to address issues associated with the playing field condition, carrying capacity and changing room provision. Improved viability should also be an important consideration including analysis of the suitability of the site for health and fitness provision and a 3G AGP. This site may be best suited to a funding application to the Football Foundation. Suitability of a 3G pitch on the West Witney site would need to be subject to close working with Oxfordshire FA and WODC with consideration of the impact on cricket use.
  - **Investment Option 3.** The Leys; refocus football use of the site on mini soccer and 9v9 football which are likely to be more compatible with the cricket use due to reduced wear and tear on the outfield. Develop options for refurbishment of the pavilion and/or construction of a new facility.

- **Investment Option 4.** King George V Playing Field; pitch improvements. As a standalone single pitch site this should be developed and delivered with Enabling Priority 1 below.
- **Enabling Priority 1.** Access to School Facilities; work with WODC, Sport England and sports' governing bodies to secure community access to school facilities putting in place Community Use Agreements or, if they already exist, helping to ensure that they are observed. If the carrying capacity is an issue support revenue funding application to the Football Foundation as part of a package that will help secure community use.
- **Enabling Priority 2.** We do not recommend that the Council actively seeks to manage and operate the planned two-pitch site in West Witney without a detailed understanding of the long-term financial implications. Instead, a more viable approach may be to work with the District Council to identify a local club that could use the facility as its home base, either under a Community Asset Transfer if the pavilion is constructed, or via a Community Use Agreement if delivered as part of the proposed School

#### 4.4 Next Steps

4.4.1 To help move the Investment Options forward, we recommend the following:

- Undertake consultation with key user groups and stakeholders including WODC and sports' governing bodies to better understand risks and issues and inform priorities
- Commission health and fitness market research in the form of a Latent Demand Analysis to inform the facility mix at West Witney
- Commission a site visit by the FA Regional Pitch Advisor to all Town Council owned sites to inform the development of an appropriate scope of works
- Commission high-level design options for site layout and pavilion/changing room plans at QE2 Field, West Witney and The Leys with associated budget cost plan and site-specific funding options appraisal
- Undertake indicative assessment of operating costs.

4.4.2 To progress the Enabling Priorities, we recommend the following:

- Undertake review of any existing requirements for community use and any Community Use Agreements.
- Engage WODC and sports' governing bodies to outline aspirations and seek support
- Consult local schools to understand the key issues relating to access by the wider community and help identify how these may be overcome through facility improvement, management arrangements etc.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – Witney Football Team Information

**Appendix 1 – Witney Football  
Team Information**

☐ ☐ Consult  
☐ ☐ QRD

**RG/1100/2020**



Organisation Name	Season	Team Category	Matchday	Name (Team Ground 1)	Name (Team Ground 2)
Witney Vikings Youth U13 Hornets Girls	2019 - 2020	11v11	Saturday	WITNEY MILLS CRICKET CLUB	WITNEY SYNTHETIC TURF PITCH
Witney Vikings Youth U14	2019 - 2020	11v11	Sunday	WITNEY MILLS CRICKET CLUB	WITNEY SYNTHETIC TURF PITCH
Witney Vikings Youth U15 Hornets Girls	2019 - 2020	11v11	Saturday	WITNEY MILLS CRICKET CLUB	WITNEY SYNTHETIC TURF PITCH
Spartan Rangers A	2019 - 2020	11v11	Saturday	KING GEORGE V PLAYING FIELD	THE HENRY BOX SCHOOL
Spartan Rangers First	2019 - 2020	11v11	Saturday	THE HENRY BOX SCHOOL	THE HENRY BOX SCHOOL
Spartan Rangers Reserves	2019 - 2020	11v11	Saturday	THE HENRY BOX SCHOOL	THE HENRY BOX SCHOOL
ABCDE FC Flexi First	2019 - 2020	11v11	Midweek	WITNEY SYNTHETIC TURF PITCH	
Bigtime United Flexi First	2019 - 2020	11v11	Midweek	WITNEY SYNTHETIC TURF PITCH	
Bully FC Flexi First	2019 - 2020	11v11	Midweek	WITNEY SYNTHETIC TURF PITCH	
Donnay Athletic International Club Futbol Flexi First	2019 - 2020	11v11	Midweek	WITNEY SYNTHETIC TURF PITCH	
Milton Flexi First	2019 - 2020	11v11	Midweek	WITNEY SYNTHETIC TURF PITCH	
North Leigh Athletic Flexi First	2019 - 2020	11v11	Midweek	WITNEY SYNTHETIC TURF PITCH	
Procision Oxford Flexi First	2019 - 2020	11v11	Midweek	WITNEY SYNTHETIC TURF PITCH	
Queens Park Strangers Flexi First	2019 - 2020	11v11	Midweek	WITNEY SYNTHETIC TURF PITCH	
Witney FC Flexi Flexi First	2019 - 2020	11v11	Midweek	WITNEY SYNTHETIC TURF PITCH	
Witney Vikings Youth U8 Hornets Girls	2019 - 2020	5v5	Saturday	WITNEY SYNTHETIC TURF PITCH	WITNEY SYNTHETIC TURF PITCH
Witney Vikings Youth U9 Hornets Girls	2019 - 2020	7v7	Saturday	WITNEY SYNTHETIC TURF PITCH	WITNEY SYNTHETIC TURF PITCH
Witney Walking Football WalkingFootball Firsts	2019 - 2020	5v5	Midweek	WITNEY SYNTHETIC TURF PITCH	
Witney Vikings Youth U10 Hornets Girls	2019 - 2020	7v7	Saturday	LEYS RECREATION GROUND	WITNEY SYNTHETIC TURF PITCH
Witney Vikings Youth U11 Hornets Girls	2019 - 2020	9v9	Saturday	LEYS RECREATION GROUND	WITNEY SYNTHETIC TURF PITCH
Witney Vikings Youth U12 Hornets Girls	2019 - 2020	9v9	Saturday	LEYS RECREATION GROUND	WITNEY SYNTHETIC TURF PITCH
Witney Vikings Youth U12 Wasps Girls	2019 - 2020	9v9	Saturday	LEYS RECREATION GROUND	WITNEY SYNTHETIC TURF PITCH
Witney Vikings Youth U8 Warriors	2019 - 2020	5v5	Saturday	LEYS RECREATION GROUND	WOOD GREEN SCHOOL
Witney Royals First	2019 - 2020	11v11	Saturday	BURWELL RECREATION GROUND	BURWELL RECREATION GROUND
Witney Royals Reserves	2019 - 2020	11v11	Saturday	BURWELL RECREATION GROUND	BURWELL RECREATION GROUND
Witney Vikings Youth U10	2019 - 2020	7v7	Saturday	BURWELL RECREATION GROUND	WOOD GREEN SCHOOL
Witney Vikings Youth U10 Warriors	2019 - 2020	7v7	Saturday	BURWELL RECREATION GROUND	WOOD GREEN SCHOOL
Witney Vikings Youth U11	2019 - 2020	9v9	Saturday	BURWELL RECREATION GROUND	WITNEY SYNTHETIC TURF PITCH
Witney Vikings Youth U11 Warriors	2019 - 2020	9v9	Saturday	BURWELL RECREATION GROUND	WITNEY SYNTHETIC TURF PITCH
Witney Vikings Youth U12	2019 - 2020	9v9	Saturday	BURWELL RECREATION GROUND	WITNEY SYNTHETIC TURF PITCH
Witney Vikings Youth U12 Warriors	2019 - 2020	9v9	Saturday	BURWELL RECREATION GROUND	WITNEY SYNTHETIC TURF PITCH
Witney Vikings Youth U13 Warriors	2019 - 2020	11v11	Saturday	BURWELL RECREATION GROUND	WITNEY SYNTHETIC TURF PITCH
Witney Vikings Youth U7	2019 - 2020	5v5	Saturday	BURWELL RECREATION GROUND	WOOD GREEN SCHOOL
Witney Vikings Youth U7 Warriors	2019 - 2020	5v5	Saturday	BURWELL RECREATION GROUND	
Witney Vikings Youth U8	2019 - 2020	5v5	Saturday	BURWELL RECREATION GROUND	WITNEY SYNTHETIC TURF PITCH
Witney Vikings Youth U8 Crusaders	2019 - 2020	5v5	Saturday	BURWELL RECREATION GROUND	WOOD GREEN SCHOOL
Witney Vikings Youth U8 Pirates	2019 - 2020	5v5	Saturday	BURWELL RECREATION GROUND	WOOD GREEN SCHOOL
Witney Vikings Youth U9	2019 - 2020	7v7	Saturday	BURWELL RECREATION GROUND	WOOD GREEN SCHOOL
Witney Vikings Youth U9 Warriors	2019 - 2020	7v7	Saturday	BURWELL RECREATION GROUND	WOOD GREEN SCHOOL
FC Mills First	2019 - 2020	11v11	Saturday	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND
Tower Hill Adult Inclusive	2019 - 2020	7v7	Sunday	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND
Tower Hill Ladies & Girls First	2019 - 2020	11v11	Sunday	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND
Tower Hill Ladies & Girls U10 Vixens	2019 - 2020	7v7	Saturday	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND	
Tower Hill Ladies & Girls U12 Vixens	2019 - 2020	9v9	Saturday	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND	
Tower Hill Ladies & Girls U14 Vixens	2019 - 2020	11v11	Saturday	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND
Tower Hill Ladies & Girls U16 Vixens	2019 - 2020	11v11	Saturday	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND
Tower Hill Men	2019 - 2020	11v11	Saturday	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND

Organisation Name	Season	Team Category	Matchday	Name (Team Ground 1)	Name (Team Ground 2)
Tower Hill Reserves	2019 - 2020	11v11	Saturday	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND
Tower Hill U10	2019 - 2020	7v7	Saturday	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND
Tower Hill U11	2019 - 2020	9v9	Saturday	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND
Tower Hill U11 Stars	2019 - 2020	9v9	Saturday	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND
Tower Hill U12	2019 - 2020	9v9	Saturday	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND
Tower Hill U13	2019 - 2020	11v11	Saturday	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND
Tower Hill U15	2019 - 2020	11v11	Saturday	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND
Tower Hill U15 Stars	2019 - 2020	11v11	Sunday	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND
Tower Hill U16	2019 - 2020	11v11	Saturday	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND
Tower Hill U16 Inclusive	2019 - 2020	7v7	Sunday	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND
Tower Hill U17	2019 - 2020	11v11	Sunday	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND
Tower Hill U7	2019 - 2020	5v5	Saturday	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND
Tower Hill U8	2019 - 2020	5v5	Saturday	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND
Tower Hill U9	2019 - 2020	7v7	Saturday	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND
Tower Hill U9 Stars	2019 - 2020	7v7	Saturday	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND	WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND